

## The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anti-Communism and the U. S. Peace Movement, 1945-1963

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banking crisis had been checked in March 1933 and hoarded gold and currency had been reconverted to bank deposits. One legacy of the interregnum between Roosevelt's election and inauguration was the decision to inaugurate new presidents in January rather than March. A legacy of the banking crisis and FDR's first 100 days goes a long way toward explaining why Iowans have generally voted for a Democratic president since 1932.

Houck offers an intriguing study of leadership rhetoric and style during the worst four years of twentieth-century American economic history. The problem, which he fails to acknowledge, is that the combination of presidential rhetoric and action was never enough to cure the economic ills of the Great Depression. The nation's economy revived only with the onset of World War II. Indeed, any Iowa farmer or Iowa banker from the 1930s could have told Houck that.

*The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anti-Communism and the U.S. Peace Movement, 1945-1963*, by Robbie Lieberman. Syracuse Studies on Peace and Conflict Resolution. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000. xvii, 244 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Michael J. Anderson is associate professor of history and chair of the department of history and political science at Clarke College. His research and publications have focused on anti-communism in the 1940s and '50s.

Robbie Lieberman offers insights into the problems and promise of the peace movement during the height of the cold war. She details the interrelationships among communism, anti-communism, and the peace movement during the years between the end of World War II and the start of protests against the war in Vietnam. She claims that a central issue of her book is "the battle that arose over what peace should mean in the postwar world" (13). Therefore she does not offer a precise definition of *peace*, but she uses the term *peace movement* broadly to refer to "groups that opposed cold war policies" (14). Lieberman rejects the idea that American communists were only cynically interested in peace issues as a way to advance Soviet interests. She suggests that the reality was more complicated and that other scholars of both the peace movement and the cold war have ignored this. She admits that there is "some truth" (2) to the charge that communist involvement in the peace movement contributed to making *peace* a subversive term during the cold war, but she argues that American communists made a positive contribution by "calling attention to issues that merited public discussion" (2) and that they sincerely advocated peace as a way to bring "better conditions for people in the United States" (2).

Lieberman traces the relationship of communists and anti-communism to the peace movement, showing how many within the peace movement came to believe that communists had wrecked the movement in the 1930s. This perception ensured that despite the postwar weakness of American communism many peace activists would seek to isolate communists. This, in turn, helped promote a "bi-partisan cold war consensus that associated the whole agenda of peace with Communist subversion" (56). Lieberman shows how, as the cold war went on, the government used anti-communist arguments against the entire spectrum of the peace movement, contributing to an atmosphere in which those working for peace found themselves subject to "arrests, physical attacks, and firing from jobs" (91).

By the early 1950s, the major peace organizations found themselves dealing with internal dissension related to two basic issues: "what to do about anti-Communist attacks and how to deal with the presence of alleged communists" (114). In the best chapters of her book, Lieberman compares how the various peace organizations responded. Her focus in this section is on the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), and Women Strike for Peace (WSP). Lieberman shows that neither WILPF nor SANE successfully challenged the anti-communism of the day. She argues that by the later 1950s SANE was in a better position to challenge "McCarthyism," but because they did not they "enabled fear and suspicion of Communists to continue to undermine the peace movement" (158). WSP, on the other hand, was successful, according to Lieberman, in resisting anti-communism. One reason for this was that times were changing, and by 1961 concern over nuclear testing had raised hopes for an easing of the cold war. Another factor was that WSP was "self-consciously different from male-led organizations such as SANE"; it was "inclusive and nonhierarchical" (163). Lieberman concludes by showing that WSP's challenge to anti-communist attacks, including a direct confrontation with the House Un-American Activities Committee, showed that things had indeed changed, although the legacy of the cold war lingers in that many people are still suspicious of those who work for peace.

Overall, this work makes a solid contribution to our understanding of the impact of the cold war on domestic political debate. There is some repetition, especially in the early chapters, and serious students of anti-communism will not be surprised by the story. However, this book adds depth to our understanding of the transition between the early cold war and the 1960s and the links between the activism for peace and the development of the women's movement.

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